

The Island County 'Certified Shore Stewards' Program

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Fully 80% of Puget Sound's nearshore resources are located on private property -- under the control of private landowners. As a group, these waterfront residents have had little or no access to reliable information about the particular features and fragility of their own shoreline resources, yet owners are in the position of greatest influence upon those resources. Island County's Marine Resources Committee [the 'MRC' - www.islandcountymrc.org] established a voluntary program for shoreline property owners that encourages voluntary adherence to best management practices on private property: "Certified Shore Stewards" [www.shorestewards.org]. Participating residents follow ten 'guidelines' for living on the nearshore that include septic system maintenance, conserving eelgrass and forage fish spawning areas, and other practical and responsible nearshore-habitat-friendly behaviors. The program provides a 44-page booklet and signage to members, hosts workshops on issues important to such owners, and trades information for good stewardship. Other counties are now looking to establish their own local 'Shore Stewards' programs, and a turnkey 'replication' model is under design.